



QUARTERLY MEETING

10:00 AM

**January 24, 2020**

Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO)

100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800

Newark, DE 19713

# MEETING MINUTES

2019/2020 THEME – SUPPORTING LOCAL JURISDICTIONS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

## **Attendees:**

Andrew Mengel, Jon Morrison, Jim Titus, John Z. Wetmore, Kevin Racine, Gabriel Rose, Steve O'Connor, Heather Dunigan, Kristi Pier, Andy Hamilton, Jack Keene, Lt. Laura Beck, Paul Moser, Karen Schonfeld, Daniel Paschall, Eli Glazier, Adam Crosby, Chris Reno, Patti Stevens, Greg Hinchliffe, Brigitte Carty, Dianne Klair, Bruce Kinzinger, Joel Gallihue

## **On Conference Call:**

Francine Waters, Kari Nye, Sarah Lipkin Sularz, Chelsea Hayman, Jeff Dunckel, Heather Ersts, Roy Gothie, Patrick McMahon, Eric Brenner, Walt Roscello, Steve Green

## **I. Welcome/Introductions/Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Marty Baker, Deputy Director of Bicycle and Pedestrian Access, Maryland Department of Transportation, opened the meeting, welcomed attendees and thanked Heather Dunigan and Wilmapco for hosting the meeting.

A word of appreciation was made to the Eric Brenner, former MBPAC chair, for his leadership over the past four years.

MDOT and MBPAC are both transitioning with membership and leadership. MDOT's MBPAC representative, Dr. Charles Glass is now Deputy Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Many MBPAC applications have been submitted to the Governor's Appointments Office, which are still accepting and reviewing the applications before making the appointments official.

Introductions were made for those attending in person and on the conference call.

The Draft October 25, 2019 meeting minutes had been posted online and available for comments. No comments were made to the minutes. Minutes will be finalized and will be posted online.





- The New Castle County Bicycle Plan is underway to identify priority projects and includes a Level of Traffic Stress (LTS)-based inventory, identifying turn lane obstructions to gauge the quality of bike facilities.
- Q&A
  - **What type of active transportation counts does Wilmapco do?** Bike and pedestrian counts are conducted at 30 intersections a year in addition to all new projects. Counters are installed on all new trails and selection-based placement occurs on older trails. Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) performs bike pedestrian counts as part of all federal projects in addition to a 5-7 year count cycle using infrared, tubes and Miovision counters.
  - **How is the transit gap being filled in Cecil County between SEPTA and MARC with bus routes?** MARC and SEPTA studies are underway with potential ridership already in place, but track operations and expansion would be needed.
  - **How is ADA access gauged?** ADA accessibility is performed for each pedestrian plan. DelDOT upgrades to ADA-compliance on state roadways based on a 2011 inventory. Most towns have transition plans, but no database on what is accessible. Montgomery County (Maryland) Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is developing a pedestrian level of comfort based on roadway characteristics. This will be incorporated into MCDOT analysis of sidewalk obstructions.
  - **Does Wilmapco work with the University of Delaware?** Wilmapco works closely with University of Delaware, now located on UD Science and Technology Park. 3 interns are typically on-site at Wilmapco.
  - The Route 40 Pedestrian Roadway Safety Audit (PRSA) led by Peter Sotherland is being partially implemented. Cecil County performed low-cost improvements as part of highway safety plan.

### III. Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial/Senator Thomas “Mac” Middleton Bridge Presentation (20 min)

Will Pines, Project Manager, Maryland Transportation Authority provided a presentation on the Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA) Board’s decision not to include a separated facility for bicycle and pedestrian access on the Nice Bridge project. See Will’s presentation here:

[http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/newMDOT/Planning/Bike\\_Walk/Documents/MBPAC/2020/2020.01.24%20Maryland%20Transportation%20Authority%20Nice%20Bridge%20Bicycle%20Access%20Decision.pdf](http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/newMDOT/Planning/Bike_Walk/Documents/MBPAC/2020/2020.01.24%20Maryland%20Transportation%20Authority%20Nice%20Bridge%20Bicycle%20Access%20Decision.pdf)

Notable information from the presentation includes:

- All MdTA facilities are funded by tolls. A loan can be made but would need to be repaid through tolls. Capital improvements are determined by MdTA Board and Chair/MDOT Secretary.

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- US 301 is a rural arterial highway with no major changes to land use context. The Virginia side has 2' shoulders. Dahlgren Heritage Trail is 2 miles from bridge, but approved county plans do not include trail extension.
- Feedback from bike groups indicated inflated costs on separated facilities. The add-alternate bid developed with \$64 million difference for the separated facility, equating to \$6.4m/ft for the separated facility
- Project planning estimated active transportation projections at 46 bike trips per day based on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and surrounding population. The Hatem Bridge averages a total of 16 monthly bike crossings.
- Project planning evaluated census ACS data with 0.1% Charles County and King George County bike commuters. Proximity to the East Coast Greenway and National Bike Route 1 were considered. Both routes are over 25 miles west of the project area. Very significant trail connection investments would be required to tie any long-distance trails to a network that connects to the Nice-Middleton Bridge. There are no plans to make connections to these long-distance trails. In absence of these plans, economic opportunities from cycling in the project area are very limited.
- The pre-construction costs estimate \$25,000 per car trip and \$1.3 million per bike trip
- During the same MdTA Board meeting, the board approved an alternate project for I-95 southbound in Harford County to alleviate weekend traffic congestion and address a high crash location. A hard-running shoulder was also approved.
- A lane sharing option is recommended for the Nice Bridge, with bike-compatible bridge joints, ITS bike alert beacons and real-time monitoring.
- There will be a 4% grade on Nice bridge versus an 8% grade climb at each end of the Conowingo Dam.
- The existing Nice Bridge will not be demolished until the new bridge is opened in 2023. Charles County declined ownership of existing bridge as life cycle costs analysis for active transportation only is estimated at \$46.7 million for 30 years. Safety inspections and maintenance vehicles will require bridge access. Bid alternatives for demolition savings is estimated at \$17 million.
- A free taxi service could be provided by MdTA at the Nice Bridge and special event police escorts are possible. To date, MdTA has not received any requests for this service. This can be discussed further with bike groups, if there is a desire for this service, but to date this concept has not been well received.
- Q&A
  - **What mitigating factors will be included on the new bridge?** Overhead lane closure signs, similar to Chesapeake Bridge, will be included in design. Specific details are being worked out but MdTA is not committing at this time that a Red "X" will be provided in the lane use controls dedicating the lane for cycling use. Some Red "X"-like maintenance will occur, potentially causing cyclist and driver expectation concerns by provided a Red "X" for

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cyclists. Operational procedures need to be considered and MdTA is working with the TriCounty Council and others to iron out details.

- **The Hatem Bridge quickly closed to transportation bikes except on weekends and holidays. Therefore, MdTA Hatem bridge numbers used for projections are not legitimate. Will Nice Bridge allowances also be rescinded?** Nice bridge operations times have not been set. The Nice Bridge does not experience a weekend spike like the Hatem Bridge. The Nice-Middleton Bridge has seasonal weekend spikes, making the travel patterns different than the Hatem Bridge. Traffic patterns need to be fully considered when establishing operational times for the Nice-Middleton Bridge.
- **Are more infrastructure truss requirements needed?** The load bearing required is similar construction for separated facilities. The shared-use path requires consideration of bike and pedestrian loading and vehicles necessary to perform inspections and maintenance. Due to the width of the separated facility, the path would have been necessary to allow for access to all areas of the bridge to perform required maintenance and inspection.
- **Does MdTA document demographics of bicyclists?** MdTA does not document demographics of highway users. **Are the Hatem users lycra wearers or families?** The point was made that most people biking across the Hatem Bridge are experienced cyclists and not families on a leisure bicycle ride.
- John Wetmore expressed disappointment that no economic development studies were associated with bridge evaluation, especially as Western Maryland earns \$11 million annually from trail-related revenue. Mr. Wetmore also noted that many bicycle master plans do not prioritize connections to rivers as crossings are typically discouraged, as is the case with the Nice Bridge.

## IV. East Coast Greenway (30 min)

Daniel Paschall, Mid-Atlantic Coordinator, East Coast Greenway Alliance, provided a presentation on how the East Coast Greenway (ECG) has developed in the area and continues to grow. See Daniel's presentation here:

[http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/newMDOT/Planning/Bike\\_Walk/Documents/MBPAC/2020/2020.01.24%20MBPAC%20East%20Coast%20Greenway%20Daniel%20Paschall.pdf](http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/newMDOT/Planning/Bike_Walk/Documents/MBPAC/2020/2020.01.24%20MBPAC%20East%20Coast%20Greenway%20Daniel%20Paschall.pdf)

Notable information from the presentation includes:

- Trans-jurisdictional collaboration builds trails. Trails provide a quality of life transportation improvement instead of car-based improvements. The ECG is a traffic separated, publicly accessible, shared-use path, either paved or firm surface and avoids steep slopes. A North Carolina study found that for every \$1 invested in trail construction, \$1.72 is generated annually.
- 1/3 of the ECG is complete (1000 miles). 25 million people live within 5 miles of the ECG. 6 regional coordinators who advocate, plan and promote the ECG.



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- In 2019, 28 new greenway segments were completed including the South Shore Trail in Anne Arundel County.
- Missing segments in Northeast MD in Cecil Harford and Baltimore Counties, Anne Arundel to DC is closing gaps!
- Susquehanna River crossing is beautiful but not from the Hatem Bridge. The crossing is accessible with MARC, local transit and the Susquehanna River Running Festival. Water taxis, separated facilities, cable cars, James River crossing in Richmond are types of crossing which may be feasible over the Susquehanna.
- MD Routes 155 and 152 in Harford County could have sidepaths.
- Q&A
  - **Has the Great American Rail Trail momentum helped ECG efforts?** Yes, these trails are changing the mindset of transportation planning.
  - **Does Maryland have the most obvious ECG Gaps?** Northeast Maryland rivals South Carolina as far as trail gaps.
  - **Is the Eastern Shore possible for feeder groups to the ECG?** Yes, although the Eastern Shore spine was dropped when the ECG master plan was developed.
  - **Will planning strategy be different for context to include protected bike lanes?** Yes, ECG coordinates local efforts for lower stress facilities.
  - **How is the coordination with bridge crossings being coordinated?** ECG submitted many letters of support for separation of the Nice Bridge.
  - Greg Hinchliffe provided Daniel with a check from Tour dem Parks, an annual fundraising bike ride held in Baltimore.

## V. State Agency Updates & Public Comment (30 min)

- MDOT TSO – Bikeways funding increased to \$3.8 million annually. New Secretary Greg Slater provided the increase. Bikeways letters of intent are now being accepted. MWCOC's Transportation Land Use Connections (TLC) applications are open through March 9. The MDOT Grants webinar will be held February 25.
- DNR – No updates.
- MDH – The Diabetes Action Plan was released in November 2019 and recommended upstream action steps to increase physical activity, and also included an action steps to support implementation of the state's bike pedestrian plan. (<https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/CCDPC/Pages/diabetes-action-plan.aspx>). MDH is supporting new Safe Routes To School (SRTS) programs with grants to two local health departments to work with their community partners. October 4, 2020 is Walk Maryland Day.
- MSDE – Regional Bike To School Day outreach has begun for the May 8, 2020 event.
- MDOT MHSO – The current MHSO grant cycle closes March 2 and is open to education and enforcement programs. In 2019, \$1.3 million in grants were awarded. The State Highway Safety Plan's 5-year update is underway and the release of 2019 crash statistics will be on April 14<sup>th</sup>.

A Statewide Transit Innovation Grants (STIG) will provide funding

## VI. Legislative Update (10 min)